

LONGTOM PASPALUM

Paspalum lividum Trin.
plant symbol = PALI7

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Kika de la Garza Plant Materials Center



Uses

Forage: Longtom paspalum (*Paspalum lividum*) is valuable as a native range plant to grazing animals. Hatch, Schuster, and Drawe (1999) note that longtom paspalum is one of the top four species in cattle diets on mid-successional rangelands along the central Texas Gulf Coast.

Erosion: It can also be used as a ground cover for erosion control.

Wildlife: The seeds of longtom paspalum can provide food for birds.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

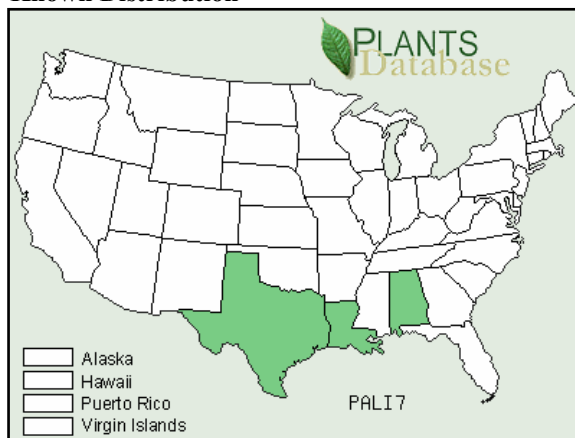
Description

Longtom paspalum is a native, warm-season, stoloniferous perennial. It is a member of the Paniceae tribe of the grass family Poaceae. It grows to 2-3 feet in height. Longtom paspalum is an apomitic species, which means it produces seed without fertilization. There is no known commercial variety of longtom paspalum.

Adaptation

Longtom paspalum is native along the Gulf of Mexico from Florida and Alabama to Texas, through Eastern Mexico, south to Argentina, and in the Caribbean Islands. In Texas, longtom paspalum can be found in the southeast region, and in the coastal part of the Rio Grande Plains. It grows in low-lying areas, wet savannahs, in swamps, along streambanks, and in ditches. Longtom paspalum prefers moist to semi-wet conditions and tight clay loam soils. It appears to be sensitive to frost.

Known Distribution



Establishment

Longtom paspalum can be grown from seed, from cuttings, or from vegetative clumps. It appears to germinate best at temperatures between 20°-30° C. Germination tests done with longtom paspalum seed by the Texas Department of Agriculture Laboratory at Giddings, Texas yielded germination averages ranging from 15%-56% for different harvest years. Seed production and seed fertility of longtom paspalum appears to be highly dependent on the amount of moisture the plants receive during the growing season. In drier years, seed production and seed fertility decrease sharply in non-irrigated plants. Even under good irrigation, seed yields have been

low (2-5 lbs. per acre) at the Plant Materials Center. There are approximately 567,500 seeds/ pound of longtom paspaulm.

Plant Materials Center staff has had the best success growing longtom paspalum from cuttings, with approximately 90% survival. Its stolons make this grass well adapted to this method of reproduction. Larger vegetative clumps of longtom paspalum can also be moved to new sites. Once established, the plants will spread themselves via many runners. Adequate irrigation must be provided for cuttings or clumps to be transplanted successfully.

Management

For seed production purposes, longtom paspalum must be irrigated when rainfall totals are low or else seed production, fill, and fertility will be greatly reduced. Regular fertilization of longtom paspalum is also necessary, as it appears to be sensitive to iron deficient soils.

Pests and Potential Problems

For Texas, this grass is best suited to southern coastal areas where mesic conditions dominate, and the chance of frost is low. This grass prefers “wet feet” and is not exceedingly drought tolerant. Under drought conditions, it does not compete well with bermuda grass. Weed control and iron deficiency can also be a problem.

For additional assistance regarding the production and establishment of longtom paspalum, please contact the Plant Material Center at (361) 595-1313.

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS <<http://plants.usda.gov>> and Plant Materials Program Web sites <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>.

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